

If I could have the indulgence of doing that before I serve as the Presiding Officer, I would appreciate that from the Senator.

Mr. DOMENICI. Obviously, we have to get consent because I am next.

I ask unanimous consent that Senator MURKOWSKI be given 3 minutes at this point and then the Senator from New Mexico be recognized for up to 10 minutes, followed by Senator HARKIN. Is that correct, the Senator wants to be next after the Senator from New Mexico?

Mr. HARKIN. Yes.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. DOMENICI. I thank the Chair. I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Alaska.

RURAL TEACHER HOUSING ACT OF 2005

Ms. MURKOWSKI. Mr. President, I appreciate the indulgence of my colleagues this afternoon.

I rise today to talk about a bill that I introduced last week that will have a profound effect on the retention of teachers, administrators, and other school staff in remote and rural areas of Alaska. This bill is the Rural Teacher Housing Act of 2005.

In rural areas of Alaska, we have school districts that face enormous challenges of recruiting and retaining teachers, administrators, and other school staff. The challenges lie primarily in the lack of housing. In one particular year, in the Lower Kuskokwim School District in western Alaska, they hired one teacher for every six who decided not to accept job offers. Half of those applicants who did not accept a teaching position in that district indicated that their decision was related to the lack of housing. When we talk about lack of housing, it is not they cannot find an apartment that is to their suiting or to their liking, the fact of the matter is there is no housing available.

In 2003, I had the opportunity to travel through rural Alaska with then-Secretary of Education Rod Paige. I took him there because I wanted him to see the challenges of educating children in such a remote and rural environment. We went to the village school in Savoonga. We met the principal there. Secretary Paige was overwhelmed when the principal showed him the broom closet in the school, not to show him the school supplies but to let him know that this is where the principal of the school lived, in the broom closet in the school. This was because there was no housing in Savoonga for the teachers.

We met the special education teacher at the school, and she brought out the mattress that she sleeps on in her classroom every night. She does not have a home to go to. She does not have a space to call her own. Her classroom is her room, her house, her bed.

The other teachers at the school shared housing in a single home.

When one thinks about that in terms of what the teachers do, needless to say there is no place for their spouse, so these teachers who are married—the teachers might be married, but the spouse might be living in another part of the State or, in the principal's case, his wife lived out of State.

Unfortunately, Savoonga is not an isolated example of the teacher housing situation in rural Alaska. Rural Alaska school districts experience a high rate of teacher turnover due primarily to the lack of housing. Turnover is as high as 30 percent each year in some of the rural areas with housing issues being a major factor.

So the question is, How can we expect our kids to receive a quality education when we cannot get good teachers to stay? How can we meet the mandates of No Child Left Behind in such an educational environment?

Clearly, the lack of teacher housing in rural Alaska is an issue that must be addressed in order to ensure that children in the rural parts of the State receive the same level of education as their peers in more urban settings.

My bill authorizes the Department of Housing and Urban Development to provide teacher housing funds to the Alaska Housing Finance Corporation, which is the State of Alaska's public housing agency. In turn, the corporation is authorized to provide grant and loan funds to rural school districts in Alaska for teaching housing projects. This legislation will allow the school districts in rural Alaska to address the housing shortage in the following ways: They can construct housing units, purchase housing units, lease housing units, rehabilitate, purchase or lease property on which the units can be constructed. They can repay loans secured for teacher housing projects and conduct other activities normally related to the construction, purchase, and rehabilitation of the teacher housing projects.

This also includes transporting construction equipment and materials to and from the communities in which these projects occur, which in the State is a particular concern because most of these communities are accessible only by air or water. Eligible school districts that accept funds under this legislation will be required to provide the housing to teachers, administrators, other school staffs, and members of their households. It is imperative that we address this important issue and allow the disbursement of funds to be handled at the State level. The quality of the education of our rural students is at stake.

I thank my colleagues and I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senator from New Mexico is recognized.

SENATE MAJORITY LEADER

Mr. DOMENICI. Mr. President, I rise to congratulate the majority leader of the Senate, BILL FRIST. I do not do this because he is my good friend but because I want to make sure that we all understand that we have had an exceptionally productive legislative year. I thank him especially for his critical help in passing legislation in areas where I have been primarily responsible. In addition to that, I want to summarize the things that have been done this year under his leadership.

The reason I came to talk about this is because there is such an overwhelming, high-octane negativism in the air that one would hardly know the Senate was at work. There is so much politics going on that one would wonder whether the Senate is even functioning. Even on the floor there is an awful lot of polarization that has occurred. I do not say this in any real accusatory sense. It is true.

In spite of that, in his own way, the majority leader has very quietly and with very mature feelings and inordinate ability grasped details of legislation and has contributed immensely to a success story.

I would like to start by talking about matters that this Senator has particularly been involved in. We were able to pass in this body an Energy Policy Act. We have been working at that for almost a decade, but for the last 3 years we have tried each year and failed. This year, we got it done.

Obviously, something was done differently. That is, we attempted to create a bipartisan bill in the committee under my chairmanship, with the help of Senator BINGAMAN, and the majority leader, as leader in the Senate, should take great pride in that accomplishment, and we should as a Senate.

In addition, as it pertains to things the Senator from New Mexico works on, we sent to the President for his signature an appropriations bill that is called Energy and Water appropriations. That bill contained hundreds of millions of dollars that go to the storm-ravaged gulf coast. It is there to continue critical projects that are already started and moving along. They are projects that are needed. They are not part of the great concern about how much may be spent or should not be spent. These are public works projects in that four-State area that are important. I think that is very good.

In that bill, the nuclear armament programs of the United States went through to the President of the United States and also some very important nuclear nonproliferation activities.

In addition, the Energy and Natural Resources Committee was part of a reconciliation bill—let us call that the deficit reduction bill—that passed. The occupant of the chair in the committee that we served on contributed a piece of that. For the first time, we sent in such a bill for the start-up of the Alaska National Wildlife Refuge activity

where we will be starting to find out what is up there in terms of producing oil for the United States. That bill was a big achievement, \$36 billion in deficit reduction. I guarantee that could not have been done without the help of the majority leader. So we got that done also with his very exceptional attention, his enlightened approach to getting people together. We barely did that, and without his help it would not have happened.

Finally, literally scores of small bills that are part of the Energy and Natural Resources Committee have passed the Senate within the last 2 days, for various things around the country. We thank him for getting that done. Yesterday, we passed big legislation and who would have thought 6 weeks ago we could pass it. It is the tax provisions of the Budget Act. We all know that that was hard. That extended the alternative minimum tax so it affects far less Americans in a negative way on the amount they owe to the Government. It extended research and development tax credits for American business so they can continue to invest in research. That whole bill had many items in it that are good for America's future. We got it passed. There are some things in it, obviously, that I do not like, and I hope some of those are not continued, because I think some of them are negative to the production of oil in the future, but overall, by an overwhelming vote, we passed a tax measure that moves us ahead. That was the strategy, for all of that was worked out with the help of our leader and the help of other distinguished Senators, including the chairman and ranking member of that committee.

I mentioned the Energy Policy Act, but let me back up to some other things people take for granted. They say, "So what?" We know our Founding Fathers said, with reference to bankruptcy in our country, the U.S. Government would have exclusive authority. For years we know the bankruptcy law of the Nation needed reform. How many times have we had bankruptcy reform on the floor only to see it fail? This year it finally passed. It will make those who file for bankruptcy slightly more responsible. That is, after they are finished, if they can by way of their job pay a small portion of what they owed, they will. That is all subject to criteria which the judges will administer so we are sure we are asking only those who can afford it to pay some. Finally, it was passed.

I say to the Senate that was a great credit to all of the Senate, but also to the distinguished majority leader for pushing, for exercising the dedication, and most of all, there is a certain steadfastness about this leader. He doesn't give up. He says what he is going to do. He stays right on it, and this is another example.

In addition, we have had the issue of excessive litigation. It still hangs over us like something we cannot quite fathom, but it is rampant. We were

told the other day that American companies spend more on litigation than they do on research when you add it all up. That is a rather startling thing. This bill we passed will not fix that. Hopefully, sometime we will address it even more broadly. But we did pass a class action reform piece of legislation. We had only one part of that pass about 8 years ago. But this one makes it more difficult to abuse the class action litigation part of the Federal jurisdiction, where we use our Federal courts to accomplish class action suits. That is a great feather in the hat of the Senate because it has taken so long to get there. For that, we have to say to our majority leader: Thank you for your leadership. It is terrific.

The highway bill—let's leave aside the pieces of the highway bill. Let's talk about the overall funding of the highway system of America by the gasoline tax imposed on our citizens. That was tied up. It was supposed to have been passed 3 years ago. It got passed after that period of time. I think the absolute commitment it would get done, and the power of a majority leader's office, got us there. That is very important.

The Senate has passed all of its appropriation bills. It looks as though we may have been able to avoid an omnibus appropriation bill—or we are going to. Let's hope so. If we do, that will be a very big credit. But at least we are on the way. We have not gotten them all passed in both Houses, but they have all cleared this institution, which is a credit at this time of year. We don't do that very often. So that is another thing we can say that demonstrates we have had good leadership, good direction, and good pressure, the kind of positive pressure the Republican leader brings.

I am going to wrap up by talking about judicial appointments. I would be remiss if I did not mention that the United States of America has a new Chief Justice. It is pretty fair to say that the extraordinary patience and persistence of the majority leader got us to this place. The country is pleased with it. That is obvious. While they do not know everything about these nominees, they learn about our Supreme Court nominees because there is much openness. This man is ultimately a credit to the President for nominating him, the Senate for finally doing what they should, and to our majority leader for pushing it as he did.

Everybody has to acknowledge there are three or four things we must get done. They, too, are being looked at with the precision and the dedication and stick-to-it-iveness of our leader. They are right there on the horizon for next year.

I understand the asbestos quagmire is something people wouldn't think is big enough to be listed among the most important pieces of pending legislation. Let me say there is no question it is. Asbestos liability, for better or for worse, the reality of it, brings to the

American economic system a chance, an opportunity, a probability of real job loss, fantastic economic degradation, and it must be resolved.

The leader has played a big role. Two Senators have been working on it on the majority side for years. Senator SPECTER is very close, with the help of our majority leader, to getting a package that can be bipartisan. That is next.

We know broad immigration reform is right up on the screen. That is very difficult. I say, and predict, since the majority leader says it is going to get done this coming year, I believe those who have been waiting are going to be able to say it will be done. I believe so.

Obviously, much more must be done. Other things we have passed are not very publicly known yet, and should be. I can't do much about it. But essentially, a bill on health technology passed last night without much ado. I say it is a giant step.

I ask unanimous consent for 2 additional minutes.

THE PRESIDING OFFICER (Ms. MURKOWSKI). Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. DOMENICI. It is a giant step in the modernization of the delivery system, which will save money. I won't take much time, except to say the majority leader had a lot to do with that.

I failed to mention that while all of this was going on, that I mentioned the Senate passed an important bill, the free trade agreement, the Central American Free Trade Agreement. Who would have thought 6 months ago that this, too, would be in this litany of successes? But it is.

All in all, in spite of all the noise, in spite of all the bickering, in spite of everything that seems to be moving toward polarization and politicization in the Senate, we did get a lot done. I particularly think much of that is attributable to the distinguished majority leader, Senator BILL FRIST. I want to again indicate to him, from this Senator, my great appreciation for his work and my admiration for how he does that.

PROVIDING FOR ADJOURNMENT

Mr. DOMENICI. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent the Senate now proceed to the consideration of H. Con. Res. 307, the adjournment resolution, provided that the concurrent resolution be agreed to and the motion to reconsider be laid on the table.

THE PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

The concurrent resolution (H. Con. Res. 307) was agreed to, as follows:

H. CON. RES. 307

Resolved by the House of Representatives (the Senate concurring), That when the House adjourns on the legislative day of Friday, November 18, 2005, or Saturday, November 19, 2005, on a motion offered pursuant to this concurrent resolution by its Majority Leader or his designee, it stand adjourned until 2 p.m. on Tuesday, December 6, 2005, or until